

Fannie Lou Hamer, Coretta Scott King and Rosa Parks, all who have made the ultimate sacrifice and yes, exhibited enormous courage. And today I ask this House to exhibit courage, to vote for a bill that gives credence to America's dream. We all are created equal.

The Voting Rights Act is not an act of color. It is an act of reputation and integrity of America to allow all Americans to vote. The honorable Barbara Jordan, whose words were "we the people," would not have been elected to the United States Congress as the first holder of this seat had it not been for the 1965 Voter Rights Act.

And Lyndon Baines Johnson, a southern Democrat President, called upon all of his colleagues, all of the Members of Congress, whether they were from the South, from the North, stand up for what is right.

And so today, we will be on the steps of the United States Congress, on the East steps, to join us for a vigil of petitioning to say to this Congress, be of good courage.

JOHN LEWIS, you bring tears to our eyes, for "Bloody Sunday" will be always in our minds, the sacrifices that have been made for the Voter Rights Act. Don't give up on us now. Pass the Voter Rights Act. Show us courage. Have a shining moment of history today. Yes, America can do it.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT

(Mr. HONDA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to associate myself with all the comments that have been shared with this country on this floor this morning.

My mother is a U.S. citizen. She was born in 1916. My father was born in 1914. Both U.S. citizens. My father was a linguist, so English, Japanese, Cantonese, Filipino were not a difficult thing for him.

My mother was born in a family of farmers who believed that women should stay home and raise families, did not have the opportunity for the education that my father had. Her experiences are not much different from those who come to this country and choose to be U.S. citizens and would like to use their primary language as a way to understand and comprehend fully that which is before them.

Prior to 1964, poll taxes, intelligence, literacy and property tests were used to sabotage the rights of voting citizens and circumvent the Constitution. Voting franchise came haltingly and very, very piecemeal to Asian Americans.

Reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act will continue the franchise and the guarantee of votes for all people and all citizens of this country.

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THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

(Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi asked and was given permission to address

the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, in 2001 one of the most shameful and shocking reminders of voting rights discrimination occurred in Kilmichael, Mississippi, my congressional district.

An all-white city council cancelled city elections 3 weeks before they were to be held because it appeared that African Americans would control the majority of the council's seats. Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, which requires covered jurisdiction, like my home State of Mississippi, to obtain preclearance from the Justice Department before they can change voting practices or procedures, protected the voting rights of the people of Kilmichael. When elections were finally held, three African Americans were elected to the board of aldermen and the town elected its first African American mayor.

As elected leaders, it is our obligation to look beyond what is good for any one of us to what is good for the whole country and its future.

Mr. Speaker, the Voting Rights Act is reverent, relevant, and must be renewed.

PROTECT AGAINST INTIMIDATION AND VOTER FRAUD BY PASSING THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

(Ms. MCKINNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. MCKINNEY. Mr. Speaker, the Voting Rights Act was passed to put an end to intimidation of poor and black voters.

Sadly, acts of intimidation and voter fraud directed at black and Latino voters are not just a thing of the past. In 2000, Florida's blacks were intimidated and illegally removed from the voter rolls. In 2002, in my district in Georgia, we learned that crossover voting can be used as effectively as the all-white primaries once were. In 2004, Ohio's black voters faced intimidation and fabricated long lines by misallocating the voting machines. Tom DeLay's Texas redistricting was ruled by this Supreme Court to violate Latino voting rights. And just last week, the Georgia legislature's second Voter ID bill got smacked down by the courts a second time.

The Voting Rights Act is relevant and necessary to protect our precious right to vote.

CONGRESS MUST PASS THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

(Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, let me just say, Mr. Speaker and Members of the House, if there is any question as to whether or not we still need the Voting Rights

Act, remember the Florida 2000 election and the coup d'etat where 27,000 ballots were disregarded, simply thrown out right in my congressional district, precincts 7, 8, 9 and 10, that vote 98 percent Democratic. Yes, it is still clear that the Voting Rights Act today is needed just as much as it was 40 years ago.

Another reason: When I was elected to Congress in 1992, it had been 129 years since an African American was elected in Florida to the United States Congress. Let me repeat, 129 years. If it was not for the Voting Rights Act, the State of Florida would still likely be without an African American Representative.

We still have a ways to go, and Congress must pass the Voting Rights Act, and not some watered-down version of it, to guarantee that millions of minorities' votes around the Nation and 3 million minorities in the State of Florida will have their voices heard and have their votes counted.

Remember the coup d'etat 2000 election.

IN SUPPORT OF THE REAUTHORIZATION OF THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

(Mr. FATTAH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FATTAH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act. I believe that this is a high-stakes test for the world's democracy that is the focus of efforts all around the globe to promote democracy. Right here at home, we still need to move towards a more perfect Union.

In my home city of Philadelphia, where the Constitution was written, we, some 150 years after that, saw the death of a young African American male, Octavius Catto, who was just going to go vote and was beaten to death by a white mob that was upset about his exercising his franchise.

The question of the Voting Rights Act is not just a question for the South; it is a question across our Nation. And the benefits and the protections of the Voting Rights Act, as we seek its reauthorization, and we seek it today, suggests to the world whether this is a democracy truly that the world should seek to emulate.

URGING PASSAGE OF THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

(Mr. GONZALEZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, in 1965 when the Voting Rights Act was first passed, Martin Luther King said, "This represents a shining moment in the conscience of man."

What a wonderful opportunity for Democrats and Republicans to come together and reignite that shining light in the conscience of man.